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Happy Easter

Easter will undoubtedly be brighter for residents of Halton Women's Place thanks to the thoughtfulness of Milton's Angie Rixner (left) and Christina Dero, who organized the distribution of bags full of gifts to the shelter. Holy Rosary School senior kindergarten students decorated the bags, which are being delivered today.

Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Regional smoking bylaw bid squashed

By JASON MISNER

The Champion

The pursuit of a possible Halton-wide smoking bylaw has been snuffed out.

On Wednesday, regional council narrowly voted 10-8 against a motion to reconsider opening up discussion of creating a Halton-wide smoking bylaw.

The motion, if approved, would have given the region's four municipalities — who have enacted their own smoking bylaws — the opportunity to vote to determine if they, in principle, agree that there should be a single bylaw across Halton.

From there, a draft smoking bylaw would have been constructed and voted upon by regional and local councils to become official.

While the issue is dead with this current regional council, a Halton-wide smoking bylaw could flare up again after a new regional council is formed following the November civic elections.

Councillors will be able to bring up a motion for reconsideration, if they choose, to pursue a region-wide smoking bylaw.

Like the one turned down Wednesday, council would have one kick at the can to create such a uniform bylaw.

Councillors feel dejected

For now, councillors Jeff Knoll and Rick Malboeuf — the two outspoken regional politicians who banded together to bring the smoking issue to the regional council table — said they feel dejected by the decision.

"Unfortunately, the political will isn't there," Mr. Malboeuf said.

The councillors brought the motion forward because they said they were concerned by the hodge-podge of smoking bylaws that exist in each municipality, and felt a region-wide bylaw would create a much-needed level playing field.

Despite the decision, they said they still feel smoking is a regional public health issue.

"I'm disappointed, but I still stand by what I've said, that smoking is a regional issue," Mr. Knoll said after the council meeting. "What we tried to do was draft a motion to give enough room for compromise and a team approach to the smoking issue."

Mr. Knoll has registered to run in the next election. If he becomes a regional councillor, he said he would pursue a region-wide smoking bylaw again if that's what his constituents wanted him to do.

The two key issues raised by councillors against supporting the motion to reconsider were the fact the bylaws have been in effect for about a year now and that the Province should be instituting an Ontario-wide smoking bylaw.

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